

APPENDIX D -- ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION CHECKLIST

Introduction:

The environmental justice movement has sparked a lot of discussion on ways to improve communications and working relations among agencies, industries, and communities. The InterAgency Working Group on Environmental Justice, led by EPA, developed a Public Participation Checklist that lays out ways to identify, inform, and involve stakeholders (e.g., environmental organizations, business and trade associations, civic/public interest groups, grassroots/community-based organizations, tribal governments, and industry). It reflects a combination of: guiding principles for setting up and conducting activities, such as public meetings; specific activities for ensuring widespread and meaningful involvement; and recommendations on how to effectively carry out those activities.

Although the checklist was initially developed in the context of environmental justice, to help federal agencies prepare for the first public meeting to discuss their EJ strategies, it embodies sound principles that apply to public participation for all communities.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION CHECKLIST

1. Ensure that Agency's public participation policies are consistent with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act, the Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act and the National Environmental Policy Act.
2. Obtain Senior Management Support to ensure that the Agency's policies and activities are modified to ensure early, effective and meaningful public participation, especially with regard to Environmental Justice stakeholders. Identify internal stakeholders and establish partnering relationships.
3. Use following Guiding Principles in setting up all public meetings:
 - Maintain honesty and integrity throughout the process.
 - Recognize community\indigenous knowledge.
 - Encourage active community participation.
 - Utilize cross-cultural formats and exchanges.
4. Identify external Environmental Justice stakeholders and provide opportunities to offer input into decisions that may impact their health, property values and lifestyles. Consider at a minimum individuals from the following organization as appropriate:

Environmental Organizations
Business and Trade Organizations
Civic / Public Interest Groups
Grassroots \ Community-based Organizations
Congress
Federal Agencies
Homeowner and Resident Organizations
International Organizations
Labor Unions
Local and State Government
Media \ Press
Indigenous People
Tribal Governments
Industry
White House
Religious Groups
Universities and Schools

5. Identify key individuals who can represent various stakeholder interests. Learn as much as

possible about stakeholders and their concerns through personal consultation, phone, or written contacts. Ensure that information gathering techniques include modifications for minority and low-income communities, for example, consider language \ cultural barriers, technical background, literacy, access to respondent, privacy issues and preferred types of communications.

6. Solicit stakeholder involvement early in the policymaking process, beginning in the planning and development stages and continuing through implementation and oversight.

7. Develop co-sponsoring/co-planning relationships with community organizations, providing resources for their needs.

8. Establish a central point of contact within the Federal agency to assist in information dissemination, resolve problems and to serve as a visible and accessible advocate of the public's right to know about issues that affect health or environment.

9. Regionalize materials to insure cultural sensitivity and relevance. Make information readily accessible (handicap access, Braille, etc.) and understandable. Unabridged documents should be placed in repositories. Executive summaries/fact sheets should be prepared in layman's language. Whenever practicable and appropriate, translate targeted documents for limited English-speaking populations.

10. Make information available in a timely manner. Environmental Justice stakeholders should be viewed as full partners and Agency customers. They should be provided with information at the same time it is submitted for formal review to state, tribal and/or Federal regulatory agencies.

11. Ensure that personnel at all levels in the Agency clearly understand policies for transmitting information to Environmental Justice stakeholders in a timely, accessible and understandable fashion.

12. Establish site-specific community advisory boards where there is sufficient and sustained interest. To determine whether there is sufficient and sustained interest, at a minimum, review correspondence files, review media coverage, conduct interviews with local community members and advertise in local newspapers. Ensure that the community representation includes all aspects and diversity of the population. Organize a member selection panel. Solicit nominations from the community. Consider providing administrative and technical support to the community advisory board.

13. Schedule meetings and/or public hearings to make them accessible and user-friendly for Environmental Justice stakeholders. Consider time frames that don't conflict with work schedules, rush hours, dinner hours and other community commitments that may decrease attendance. Consider locations and facilities that are local, convenient and which represent

neutral turf. Ensure that facility meets American with Disabilities Act Statements for equal access. Provide assistance for hearing impaired individuals. Whenever practical and appropriate provide translators for limited-English speaking communities. Advertise the meeting and its proposed agenda in a timely manner in the print and electronic media. Provide a phone number and/or address for communities to find out about pending meetings, issues, enter concerns or to seek participation or alter meeting agenda.

Create an atmosphere of equal participation (avoid a "panel of experts" or "head table"). A two day meeting is suggested with the first day reserved for community planning and education. Organize meetings to provide an open exchange of ideas and enough time to consider issues of community concern. Consider the use of a neutral facilitator who is sensitive and trained in environmental justice issues. Ensure that minutes of the meetings are publically available. Develop a mechanism to provide communities with feedback after meetings occur on actions being considered.

14. Consider other vehicles to increase participation of Environmental Justice stakeholders including:

Posters and Exhibits
Participation in Civic and Community Activities
Public Database and Bulletin Boards
Surveys
Telephone Hotlines
Training and Education Programs, Workshops and Materials

15. Be sure that trainers have a good understanding of the subject matter both technical and administrative. The trainers are the Ambassadors of this program. If they don't understand - no one will.

16. Diversity in the workplace: whenever practical be sure that those individuals that are the decision makers reflect the intent of the Executive Order and come from diverse backgrounds, especially those of a community the agency will have extensive interaction with.

17. After holding a public forum in a community establish a procedure to follow up with concrete actions to address the communities' concerns. This will help to establish credibility for your agency as having an active role in the federal government.

18. Promote interagency coordination to ensure that the most far reaching aspects of environmental justice are sufficiently addressed in a timely manner. Environmental problems do not occur along departmental lines. Therefore, solutions require many agencies and other stakeholders to work together efficiently and effectively.

19. Educate stakeholders about all aspects of environmental justice (functions, roles, jurisdiction, structure and enforcement).
20. Ensure that research projects identify environmental justice issues and needs in communities, and how to meet those needs through the responsible agencies.
21. Establish interagency working groups (at all levels) to address and coordinate issues of environmental justice.
22. Provide information to communities about the government's role as it pertains to short term and long term economic and environmental needs and health effects.
23. Train staff to support inter and intra agency coordination, and make them aware of the resources needed for such coordination.
25. Provide agency staff who are trained in cultural, linguistic and community outreach techniques.
26. Provide effective outreach, education and communications. Findings should be shared with community members with an emphasis on being sensitive and respectful to race, ethnicity, gender, language, and culture.
27. Design and implement education efforts tailored to specific communities and problems. Increase the involvement of ethnic caucuses, religious groups, the press, and legislative staff in resolution of Environmental Justice issues.
28. Assure active participation of affected communities in the decisionmaking process for outreach, education, training and communities programs -- including representation on advisory councils and review committees.
29. Encourage federal and state governments to "reinvent government" -- overhaul the bureaucratic in favor of community responsive.
30. Link environmental issues to local economic issues to increase level of interest.
31. Use local businesses for environmental cleanup or other related activities.
32. Utilize, as appropriate, historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and Minority

Institutes (MI), Hispanic Serving Colleges and Universities (HSCU) and Indian Centers to network and form community links that they can provide.

33. Utilize, as appropriate, local expertise for technical and science reviews.

34. Previous to conducting the first agency meeting, form an agenda with the assistance of community and agency representatives.

35. Provide "open microphone" format during meetings to allow community members to ask questions and identify issues from the community.

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